

## **Cycling UK Stevenage Comment on Planning Application Number: 25/00400/FPM**

**Address:** Maxwell Road Stevenage Herts SG1 2EW

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing buildings and erection of Class E discount food store with associated car parking, landscaping, engineering and drainage works.

This comment is submitted on behalf of Cycling UK Stevenage and is focussed on the aspects of this application that relate to cycling.

To meet National Guidance LTN-1, traffic free links to existing cycleway infrastructure on Gunnels Wood Road and Fairlands Way are essential if this development is to go ahead. In line with SBC Local Plan IT5 These links must be from the existing traffic free network to all the cycle parking provided at the store and must include safe routes across the car park.

SP6 of the current local plan states, “We will create the conditions for a significant increase in passenger transport, walking and cycling”. The plans for this development in their current form do not do this due to the lack of access to the site and across the carpark for people cycling.

The current plans refer only to access from Maxwell Road and Gunnels Wood Road. If active travel is to be prioritised, there must be direct access from Fairlands Way.

(We note that SP6 b) of the revised Local plan under Reg19 review specifically states that SBC will “require developments to first prioritise active travel in the layout of sites and by providing connections to surrounding pedestrian and cycle networks”.)

Transport Statement 6.1 a) states that “Pedestrian and cycle access to the site will be provided from Maxwell Road to the east of the main vehicular access, a zebra crossing will be introduced across Maxwell Road to assist those accessing the site from the north”. The zebra crossing alone will not provide access to people cycling. In addition to the zebra crossing for pedestrians, there will have to be a crossing for people cycling. Only the north side of Maxwell Road has a cycle path, there is currently no provision for cyclists on the south side. The entrance from the path to the store site itself needs to be made wide enough for people to cycle through.

Travel Plan 3.2 states “A second pedestrian and cycle access will be provided from the shared use path along the western boundary of the site.” Due to the cycleway being lower than the site itself, this entrance will have steps and a zig-zag ramp. Use of this zig zag ramp will require a person cycling to dismount and push their cycle. It is therefore not an accessible entrance for all people cycling.

The path across the car park from the top of the zig-zag ramp to the store entrance and cycle parking has been shown as a footpath. There is no provision shown for people cycling to proceed directly to the store itself. There should be a clearly identified route for people cycling to continue to progress safely across the carpark to reach the cycle parking at the store entrance. This is in accordance with SBC Local Plan IT5 which states “These links must be from the existing traffic free network to all the cycle parking provided at the store and must include safe routes across the car park.”

The SBC Local Plan SP6 states the intent to “create the conditions for a significant increase in passenger transport, walking and cycling”. On the current plans, there are no entrances for cyclists to use to enter the site and continue to cycle without having to dismount and push

their cycle. If a cyclist cycles across the car park and leaves by the road entrance, they must turn right onto Maxwell Road to rejoin the cycleway on the opposite side of the road. This will be difficult given that this will be directly across the path of cars turning right into the store entrance as they approach from Gunnels Wood Road. An expectation for cyclists of all ages and levels of experience to leave a traffic-free environment to use the road carriageway in this way would be a significant barrier for people cycling and thus be against SP6 f.

All cycle parking for customers must be close to the entrance to the store. There should be provision for cycles with trailers, cargo bikes and adapted cycles with protection from poor weather. There should be trolley parking adjacent to all cycle parking so that customers do not have to leave a loaded bike unattended to return their trolley.

For a store with retail space of 1516 metres squared, the SBC Parking SPD requires 10 short term spaces and 9 long term spaces. The provision of 16 cycle parking spaces under constant surveillance outside the store is welcomed.

Travel Plan 3.5 states “Secure staff cycle parking will also be provided for employees within the warehouse.” Details of the location of the staff cycle parking are not given, and it is not shown on the building plan. Warehouse space within the building appears to be very limited and access to it across the shop floor. Unless a space for staff cycle parking – and access to it – is clearly designated on the plans, this application does not meet the requirements of the SBC Parking SPD.

The Travel Plan paras 4.14 and 4.15 along with figure 4.3 show that the 5km catchment for where a cycle journey can replace a short car journey would include nearly all of Stevenage. The route for people cycling from the East and the South will be via Fairlands Way. The most direct access to the store entrance will be using the path to the east of the site linking Fairlands Way to the end of Maxwell Road. The capacity of this path will be exceeded, so this path will need to be widened so in line with SP6, the developer should be required to make financial contributions to the improvement of this route to the vicinity of the site. The developer highlighted in the application that they own the land adjacent to this path.

People cycling from the North of the site will access coming south along Gunnels Wood Road. The layout, road markings and signage at the nearby Meadway and Cockerell Close junctions need to be updated to be in line with current LTN1/20 guidance to allow people cycling, walking and wheeling to have priority at these junctions. In line with SP6, the developer should be required to make financial contributions to these improvements of this route to the vicinity of the site.

At the southwest corner of the site, there is a cycleway junction between the Fairlands Way and Gunnels Wood Road cycleways. People walking along the pedestrian path on Fairlands Way need to cross over 2 separate sections of cycleway if they are going to proceed north along Gunnels Wood Road north towards the store entrance. As the pedestrian path is closer to the road carriageway, they will need to cross the cycleway again to access the steps or zig-zag ramp entrance to the site. This is the route between the store and bus stops on Fairlands Way and northbound on Gunnels Wood Road and is not straightforward for anyone with mobility issues. There is no cycleway lighting at this corner and the layout has several blind corners. In line with SP6, the developer should be required to make financial contributions to these improvements of this junction for people walking, wheeling and cycling in the vicinity of the site.